



(S//SI) With NSA Help, Iraqi SIGINTers Make Great Strides

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(S//SI) A report from the NSA team that is building up an indigenous Iraqi SIGINT organization...

(S//SI) I recently returned from a second tour in Iraq as the FAD* Iraqi SIGINT Element (ISE) Rebuild Task Force Chief, and the experience keeps getting better. During my initial tour last year, the primary goal was to enhance relations with the ISE, an organization within the Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS). To accomplish this goal, the FAD team procured COTS* collection equipment, provided basic operator training, and established an information dissemination process to provide ISE with vital intelligence information and to forward Indications and Warnings information to the Multinational Forces in Iraq.

(S//SI) At the conclusion of my first tour, the ISE consisted of approximately 30 local nationals operating in Baghdad from five fixed locations and one mobile unit with the ability to intercept VHF and UHF signals using general frequency scanning technology. Despite using basic equipment and having a limited number of personnel, the ISE averaged nearly 150 interceptions per day.

(S//SI) My recent tour proved to be an equally exhilarating four months. Again, focusing on foreign relations, the team had two key objectives: establish a formal training program and extend the presence of SIGINT activities. Creating and implementing the training program was a major step towards self-sustaining ISE operations. Using "train-the-trainer" methodology, the FAD team was able to transfer responsibility for training incoming operators to a newly appointed ISE Training Coordinator.

(S//SI) Near the end of my tour, the FAD team coordinated all logistics and travel arrangements to deploy an ISE team to Camp Tiger, II Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) camp near Al Qa'im on the Syrian border. INIS relations with the Iraqi Army prevented ISE from using Iraqi Security Forces as protection at field locations, but welcomed the opportunity to work under the safety of II MEF. The ISE team, accompanied by several FAD team members, traveled to Camp Tiger and became operational seven hours after boots hit the ground. The ISE team began intercepting calls relating to battle damage assessment and activities targeting convoy movements. **The II MEF was astounded at the products and proceeded to request additional teams** to Hayditha and Hit, two other extremely active locations in the Al Anbar region.

(S//SI) Additionally, the team received a visit from General Casey, the Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) Commander, who praised the efforts of the ISE team. Coordination activities have been initiated for additional ISE teams outside of Baghdad in Mosul and Basrah, maintaining flexibility to support other locations at the request of MNF-I command.

(S//SI) At the conclusion of my second tour, **the ISE had approximately 100 employees and were collecting over 5,000 calls per day.** To date, NSA/CSS Georgia has produced over 280 Significant Activity (SIGACTS) reports based on ISE collect, with 7 SIGACT reports from the team in Al Qa'im. The FAD team has already developed a strategic plan and system requirements to expand operations and distribute intelligence information.

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(S//SI) FAD Iraqi SIGINT Element Rebuild Task Force, May 2005

(S//SI) The groundwork is being laid to provide additional capabilities to the fledgling ISE, collection of Global System Mobile (GSM) phones and HF communications. In order to move

forward with any of these initiatives, the INIS needs to establish a solid relationship with the Iraqi Security Forces, as well as new members of the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense after elections in December. The initial ISE deployment depended upon US military for physical security and logistical support of ISE personnel. As the US military draws down, the ISE will need to depend on ISF for protection.

(S//SI) I was very fortunate to have two tours involving highly motivated and capable US, UK, and Iraqi personnel, all of whom made tremendous contributions to this effort. It was an amazing and unique experience that I would recommend to anyone seeking excitement and challenges in support of US efforts abroad. I would emphatically do it all again without question (pending approval from the wife and kids).

*(U) Notes:

FAD = NSA's Foreign Affairs Directorate

COTS = Commercial Off-the-Shelf

(U//FOUO) *This article is reprinted from the Foreign Affairs Digest, October edition (titled "Iraqi SIGINT Element (ISE) Tour.") See the [previous article on FAD and the ISE](#).*

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